



Senators Feinstein and Leahy Call for New Policy on Use of Cluster Bombs

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Washington, DC – U.S. Senators Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) and Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) today introduced an amendment to the FY 2007 Department of Defense Appropriations bill aimed at preventing hundreds of unnecessary civilian deaths and injuries caused every year by unexploded cluster bombs.

The Cluster Munitions Amendment would prevent funds from being spent to purchase, use, or transfer cluster bombs until the Department of Defense has adopted rules of engagement to ensure that cluster bomb are not used in or near any concentration of civilians.

“Instead of targeting troop formations and enemy armor, unexploded bomblets target innocent civilians, seriously maiming or killing their victims,” Senator Feinstein said. **“This runs counter to our values and counter to the laws of war.**

Senator Feinstein continued, **“The human death toll and injury from these weapons are felt every day. Innocent children think they are picking up a play toy in the field, and suddenly their arm is blown off. We need to adjust our policies on the use of cluster bombs, and we can do so easily.”**

“For too long, innocent civilians, not enemy combatants, have suffered the majority of casualties from cluster munitions. The recent experience in Lebanon is only the latest example of the appalling human toll of injury and death. Strict rules of engagement are long overdue, and I hope the Pentagon will support this amendment to ensure that our cluster munitions are not used in civilian areas,” said Senator Leahy.

A cluster munition is a large bomb, rocket or artillery shell that contains hundreds of small submunitions, or individual bomblets. In some cases, up to 40 percent of the bomblets fail to explode and therefore pose a significant danger to civilians long after conflict has ended. In addition, U.S. military forces face thousands of unexploded bomblets as they advance in combat.

Senator Feinstein cited Israel’s recent alleged use of cluster bombs in Lebanon as a factor in proposing this amendment. Throughout southern Lebanon, more than 405 cluster bomb sites containing approximately 100,000 unexploded bomblets have been discovered. Each site covers a radius of 220 yards.

Thirteen people, including three young children, have been killed and 48 injured. So far, more than 2,900 unexploded bomblets have been destroyed in Lebanon but it will take 12 to 15 months to complete the effort.

In addition to the most recent use of cluster bombs, the impact of unexploded cluster bombs on civilian populations has been devastating:

- An estimated 1,220 Kuwaitis and 400 Iraqi civilians have been killed since 1991.
- In Iraq in 2003, 13,000 cluster bombs with nearly 2 million bomblets were used. Combining the first and second Gulf Wars, the total number of unexploded bomblets in the region is approximately 1.2 million.
- In Afghanistan in 2001, 1,228 cluster bombs with 248,056 bomblets were used. Between October 2001 and November 2002, 127 civilians were killed, 70 percent of them under the age of 18.
- In the first Gulf War, 61,000 cluster bombs were used containing 20 million bomblets. Since 1993, unexploded bomblets have killed 1,600 innocent men, women, and children and injured more than 2,500.
- Between nine and 27 million unexploded cluster bombs remain in Laos from U.S. bombing campaigns in the 1960s and 1970s. Approximately 11,000 people, 30 percent of them children, have been killed or injured since the war ended.

“Unexploded cluster bombs fuel anger and resentment and make security, stabilization, and reconstruction efforts that much harder,” Senator Feinstein said.

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